

After site preparation, and 2 – 3 years after reforestation, habitat is generally characterized by an abundance of forbs, legumes and grasses that provide food and cover for wildlife adapted to early successional forest communities. As pine seedlings grow, however, their expanding crown shades out plants beneficial to wildlife adapted to these conditions. In addition, rapidly growing seedlings out-compete herbaceous plants for water, nutrients, and space. Eventually, the pine canopy will completely close and stand-interior habitat is lost.



Landowners can maintain wildlife habitat throughout the rotation of a pine stand by implementing a roadside management program. Trees and brush should be removed on both sides of roads (if possible) approximately 30 - 60 feet. Initial clearing of roadsides can be done during a scheduled timber harvest. Once roadsides are cleared, mow or disk roadside habitat every 2 – 3 years to maintain a diversity of weeds, grasses, and vines beneficial to wildlife.

Roadsides provide essential brood habitat and food for all age classes of turkeys. Turkeys use roads and roadsides as travel lanes to go from one habitat to another. Turkeys can avoid unsuitable habitat by walking on roads that link better habitat. Deer are attracted to roadsides due to an increase in forage production. Quail and rabbits are drawn to roadsides by an increase in early successional habitat and edge.

Opening up roads to increased exposure to sunlight (called day-lighting) can reduce road maintenance cost. Sun and wind will be able to reach the roads and reduce drying time, decreasing damage by vehicles.

Roads can be harmful for wildlife if installing gates on roads, and preventing road hunting, poaching and illegal dumping does not control access. Under a roadside management program, limiting and controlling access is the most important wildlife management tool.

Photo Credit: Claude Jenkins



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